United Nations

A/62/730

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 March 2008

Original: English

Sixty-second session
Agenda item 113 (d)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Letter dated 29 February 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I would like to inform you that the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has presented its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2008-2011 at the elections to be held on 16 May 2008 during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

I have attached a copy of the United Kingdom's voluntary pledges and commitments (see annex).

(*Signed*) John **Sawers**

08-26668 (E) 120308

Annex to the letter dated 29 February 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

United Kingdom campaign for re-election as a member of the Human Rights Council

Pledges and commitments in human rights

1) Commitment to work in partnership to reinforce human rights at the heart of the UN

i. The UK will continue to work to strengthen the UN Human Rights Council, promoting universality, transparency, objectivity in all its work.
ii. The UK will continue to support the unique contribution of the UN General Assembly's Third Committee.
iii. The UK reaffirms the commitment from the World Summit in 2005 to human rights mainstreaming.
iv. The UK is committed to the continued effective contribution of regional organisations, national human rights institutions and civil society.
v. The UK will continue to work in a spirit of openness, consultation and respect for all, on a foundation of genuine dialogue and cooperation.

2) Commitment to continue support to UN bodies

i. The UK will continue to support the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In addition to our regular budget contribution, the UK contributes multi-annual, un-earmarked funding. We are currently providing £2.5 million annually as a voluntary contribution through a 3 year institutional agreement.
ii. The UK will continue to cooperate fully with the UN's human rights mechanisms, including by maintaining a standing invitation to all Special Procedures. The UK will continue to endeavour to meet its obligations to the UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies fully.
iii. The UK will continue its voluntary institutional support to UN bodies, including those whose work contributes to the better promotion and protection of human rights. In 2007-2008, the Department for International Development is providing over £150 million core funding to UN agencies. In addition, it is providing funding in 2007-8 for specific programmes that promote fulfilment of human rights, including: the Action 2 Global Programme (£300,000); OHCHR's programme on rights and HIV/AIDS (£60,000); UNIFEM's women, peace and security programme (approx £1.5 million); and UNDP's Millennium Development Campaign (£750,000)

3) Commitment to work for progress on human rights internationally

i. The UK will continue to encourage ratification of UN human rights instruments to which it is a party and, through development and other assistance programmes, their successful implementation by governments.
ii. Recognising that development and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, the UK will continue to support country-led development strategies that integrate human rights. The UK Government is committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is working hard to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty. We aim to develop effective partnerships with governments based on a shared commitment to: poverty reduction and reaching the MDGs; respecting human rights and other international obligations; and strengthening financial management and accountability.

iii. The UK will continue to seek to advance human rights themes, developing international thinking and consensus. For example:

- The UK Government is committed to tackling all forms of gender-based violence. Domestic work is guided by Action Plans on Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence and Abuse, Trafficking, and Forced Marriage; and by a national strategy on prostitution. The Association of Chief Police Officers has recently issued a draft Honour-Based Violence Strategy and 2-year Action Plan that sets out proposals for improving police response to honour-based violence including honour killings and female genital mutilation. Internationally, we remain committed to the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and are one of the few UN member states to have drawn up a National Action Plan for its implementation.
- Torture. The UK is committed to combating torture wherever and whenever it occurs. Domestically, establishment of the UK's National Preventive Mechanism under Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) is expected during 2008. Internationally, we will continue to encourage ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, and provide assistance for their successful implementation by governments. The UK fully supports the recently-established OPCAT Subcommittee and will continue to provide support and assistance to it where appropriate.
- Contemporary forms of slavery: The UK is committed to learning the lessons of its own past, and to tackling modern-day slavery. We have pledged £20,000 to a UN memorial for the victims of the slave trade, and led the creation of a new UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery at the Human Rights Council in 2007. The UK became a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, and launched a national Action Plan on Human Trafficking, in March 2007. We are committed to their full implementation and intend to ratify the Convention by the end of 2008. We are playing a leading role against trafficking within the European Union including leading an initiative on Human Trafficking. This is linked to a national police-led anti-trafficking operation that was launched in October 2007 and is on-going. So far the operation has led to more than 300 arrests and over 600 premises have been visited. In excess of £400,000 has been seized in cash with a number of money laundering investigations taking place. The UK Human Trafficking Centre, established in 2006, is playing a key role in the operation. The UK fully supports the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery, and played an active role in the Vienna Forum in February 2008.
- Right to education. The UK Government announced in 2006 that we will spend £8.5 billion in support of education over the next 10 years, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. This long-term commitment will provide governments with predictable funding against which they can prepare ambitious 10-year investment plans to achieve their education goals. Promoting gender equality in education is a key focus for the UK.
- Health. The UK is committed to the containment and progressive elimination of the spread of HIV/AIDS, and prioritises the needs of those groups most at risk of HIV/AIDS. The UK is the second largest bilateral donor to combating AIDS and committed £1.5 billion over the period 2005-2008, of which around 10% will be spent on programmes for children.
- The UK will continue to engage business as a positive force for the promotion of human rights through its leading work on Corporate Social Responsibility. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy, published in February 2007, reaffirms UK support for voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives including the UN Global Compact, and for the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights.
- The UK works to promote human rights in our international relations. We are committed to the fundamental values of the Commonwealth, including tolerance, respect, democracy, good governance, human rights, gender equality and the rule of law. We will continue to work with Commonwealth partners to share best practice and learn from the experience and heritage of our fellow members. We also engage with other international and regional organisations, such as the World Bank and the European Union, to promote better integration of human rights in their work.

4) Commitment to uphold highest standards of human rights at home

i. The UK Government will endeavour to maintain full implementation of all its obligations under the international Covenants, Conventions and Optional Protocols to which it is party.

ii. The UK Government is committed to tackling inequality and discrimination, to ensure that every individual is able to fulfil their potential through the enjoyment of equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities. For example:

- We are committed to modernising British equality legislation into an Equality Bill, combining legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The Government has also consulted on potential measures to expand protection against discrimination on the grounds of age to the provision of goods and services. The new Commission for Equality and Human Rights began work on 1 October 2007, as an independent and influential champion for the reduction of inequality, elimination of discrimination, protection of human rights and strengthening of good relations between individuals.
- The UK was one of the first to sign the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March 2007. We are committed to ratification without undue delay.
- Through its dedicated 3 year strategy to increase race equality and community cohesion ("Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society") the Government has brought together practical measures to improve opportunities for all, helping to ensure that a person's racial or ethnic origin is not a barrier to success. Looking forward, the Government has embedded commitments to reduce inequalities for people from minority ethnic backgrounds into its key public service targets for the next 3 years in areas like employment, education, health and the criminal justice system. These targets, and the funding that will follow them, demonstrate the Government's continuing commitment to tackling inequalities.
- Where the responsibility for these matters is transferred to, or where matters are specific to Northern Ireland, we will also review equality legislation and in addition support the Equality and Human Rights Commissions and the Commissioners for Children and Young People and Victims and Survivors.

iii. Protection of children's rights remains a key priority for the UK government and its devolved administrations. We have put in place a substantial body of legislation, which serves further to enshrine in law the well-being of children. Encompassing the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this creates an effective national framework to support positive outcomes for children. We continue to strengthen our focus on the needs of children and their families in a holistic and integrated way, ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life, and receives the ongoing support and protection they need to allow them to fulfil their potential. We have established Commissioners for Children and Young People across the UK.

iv. The UK Government will continue to pursue human rights goals in a spirit of consultation, openness and accountability. To this end, we will continue actively to seek out the expertise and experience of civil society, and will maintain a dialogue on our human rights work with NGOs and Parliament.